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Dear Cy:

This is a purely personal think-piece on the present state of our relations with the Soviet Union, for whatever value it may have toward your own thinking. The first part is background analysis; the second part draws some policy implications.

I. Background: Some observations on present Soviet outlook.

1. The current state of mind of the Soviet leadership:

- a) Whether or not the Soviet leaders acknowledge that any miscalculations were involved in their decisions on Afghanistan (and surely there were), they do not have any sense of culpability for what they have done. They feel that what they did was justified, and they feel aggrieved at the reaction they have reaped.
- b) They probably genuinely believe that the scale of outside help to the Afghan insurgents justified and required the Soviet intervention. It may be that the reports from the field magnified this outside help, as an explanation of the disintegrating situation. In any case, present reports of post-invasion aid to the insurgents will fortify their earlier convictions.
- c) They also believe that the U.S. reaction to Afghanistan is mainly motivated by pre-election politics. They feel that the alarms raised about Pakistan, Iran, and Yugoslavia are similarly motivated.

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- 3) They have probably written off any expectation of an improvement of relations with the U.S. until after the election and (if Carter is re-elected) perhaps beyond. They came to this conclusion before Afghanistan. The most important factors in their minds were: the Soviet troops in Cuba issue; the TNF decision; the moves toward China; the delay in ratification of SALT, accompanied by higher military budgets and the MX decision. They believe the U.S. deliberately sought to scuttle detente, for domestic political reasons.
- e) The attitude of the Soviet leadership toward the U.S. at the time the decision on Afghanistan was made was probably one of anger, frustration, emotionalism.

2. The Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan:

- a) They probably exaggerated both the likelihood and the implications of a political and military setback if they failed to act.
- b) It is unlikely that the Soviet leadership saw its action as a significant qualitative departure from previous policy, or realized that it would be seen as such. In their eyes, it represented a continuation of previous policy, even though in earlier cases, outside the bloc, they worked through Cuban troops rather than their own.
- c) In considering the effect of this action on Third World states, the Soviet leaders probably judged that a decisive use of military power would have a salutary intimidating effect, if any.
- d) In the period during which the invasion was planned, the Soviets probably believed the U.S. might be involved in some limited military action in Iran, and that this would modify world reaction to their own move.

3. Domestic repercussions in the USSR:

Despite all the foregoing considerations, the effects of the Afghan adventure must have been powerfully disturbing to the Soviet leadership. Although the leadership may be in a truculent frame of mind, they will have to cope with serious domestic consequences:

- a) Economic planning will have to be adjusted substantially, to take account of agricultural and industrial dislocations. Inputs from abroad will be lower. Strains on hard currency will be greater. Military expenditures will be greater. All this comes on top of recent reports of unsatisfactory economic performance in 1979. It is possible that the large uncertainties now facing Soviet foreign economic relations may strengthen tendencies toward a return to autarky.
- b) Domestic controls on cultural and political dissidence will be tightened, without regard to their impact abroad. The dissident movement will be subject to harsher measures. Jewish emigration is likely to be further reduced. Strong propaganda measures will be needed to offset the impact of military casualties on foreign soil.

4. Foreign policy effects:

- a) Although the official Soviet position is that the Soviet commitment to "detente" remains unchanged, the tone of Soviet propaganda regarding the U.S. has become sharper, while the Soviet effort to cultivate relations with Western Europe intensifies.
- b) For the present, the Soviet Union cautiously seeks to avoid measures that will increase international tension, but it may be tempted to exploit opportunities to increase U.S.

difficulties in the Middle East, and to exploit a breakdown of the arrangements in southern Africa.

- c) There are tentative signs that the Bulgarians may be testing Yugoslavia's nerve by floating trial balloons, perhaps at the instigation of the Soviet Union.
- d) The Soviet Union has curbed Western contacts with Eastern Europe, to prevent the exploitation of intra-bloc tensions.

5. Longer-term effect:

- a) While it is possible that in their present mood of truculence, the Soviet leadership may conclude that the entire Brezhnev "peace policy" has failed, and that we may have a period of greater assertiveness in the exploitation of their increased military capabilities, the logic that led them to seek to advance their interests through low-tension policies is likely to assert itself again in time. This logic is based upon the following factors:
 - i) the Soviet economy requires technology from abroad; the alternative is a major structural change;
 - ii) a low-tension policy is more likely to capitalize on political trends abroad which they believe will be advantageous to them;
 - iii) while they have not shown restraint in the nuclear competition, they are concerned about the risks of a nuclear arms race;
 - iv) despite their conventional military build-up, they continue to have a

prudent fear of the risk of escalation in local conflicts;

- v) further increases in their diversion of resources to the military sector will postpone and complicate their efforts to rectify fundamental economic problems.

II. Some policy implications for the U.S.

I. Near-term:

- a) If the measures we are taking are to have the effect we desire on the Soviet Union, it is essential that we try to take these measures out of the pre-election context as much as possible. The broader the national base of support for our policies toward the Soviet Union, the more seriously the Soviet Union will take them, and the readier they will be to believe that we can sustain these measures as long as necessary--even beyond the election.
- b) It is also crucial to maintain Alliance solidarity at all costs, and with whatever resilience may be required, to prevent the Soviet Union from opening up divergencies for manipulation.
- c) Although it is not likely that the Soviet Union will be able soon to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan to contemplate a substantial reduction in its military presence, we should continue to make our position clear that a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan is a necessary first step toward an improvement in relations, and that we remain willing to see a neutral, non-aligned Afghanistan. How the Soviets reach this point is a problem only they can solve, but our level of assistance to the insurgents should be calibrated with

this objective in mind. It is clearly preferable from the point of view of our interests in the Persian Gulf area to have the Soviet forces in Afghanistan reducing rather than building up.

- d) While it may be many months before any practical movement toward a political solution is feasible, it is necessary to make clear to them from the outset the direction we want to go.
- e) For this reason, it is in our interest to see a proposal for the neutralization of Afghanistan emerge--preferably under non-aligned sponsorship. Such a proposal would hold out the promise of an internationally-supervised ban on assistance to the insurgents from the outside in return for complete Soviet withdrawal and establishment of a broadly-based government.
- f) Soviet disclaimers of aggressive intent toward Iran, Pakistan, and Yugoslavia cannot, of course, be taken at face value. It is nevertheless useful to extract such commitments on their part in discussions about their action in Afghanistan.
- g) Further punitive measures would be counterproductive in terms of our relationship with the Allies as well as the Soviets. Both could see a continuation of new punitive steps as stemming from basic anti-Soviet motives. We should keep the framework of our relationship in place, continuing to avoid abrogation or violation of existing bilateral agreements. In particular, this would mean proceeding with the minimum required eight-million-ton grain sale this year. We would not, however, proceed to negotiate new agreements in the absence of Soviet withdrawal--including renewal of the grains agreement which would otherwise be negotiated in the second half of this year.

- h) The most serious practical consequence of the deterioration of relations with the Soviet Union is the possible destruction of the framework of arms control negotiations--particularly in regard to strategic weapons. It is necessary to reiterate with conviction our intent to move toward SALT ratification when conditions permit, in late 1980 if possible.

2. Longer-term:

- a) Although detente in the 1972 sense of the word is not re-creatable, it would be useful both for our relations with our Allies and for its effect upon the Soviet leadership if we made it clear at responsible levels that our long-term interest in a more constructive relationship with the Soviet Union remains a firm commitment of the U.S. Government.
- b) The key word in affirming this commitment is realistic. It has to be free of the ambiguities that have been associated with the word "detente." It has to be based upon a realistic view of the nature of the Soviet system, and of Soviet policy, and of the competitive elements of the relationship.
- c) One essential element in projecting this policy commitment is to get across to the Soviet Union the message that their own commitment to the exploitation of local conflict situations (in the name of support for national liberation movements) inevitably prevents a low-tension relationship with us. This has been a contradiction in their policy which they have to be brought to face. A realistic policy of moderated tension requires concrete and specific restraints in the conduct of the competition.

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- d) For our part, a realistic policy also implies consistency between our actual policy and our declaratory policy. The Soviets will not move in the direction of acceptance of greater restraint if they perceive that, despite our words, we are committed to a relationship of maximum confrontation on all fronts.
- e) The priority element in a relationship of moderated tension remains the effort to stabilize the strategic military competition. We need to reassert our self-interest in resuming the SALT process and making it more effective than it has been.
- f) An essential concomitant of a relationship of moderated tension with the Soviet Union is a more effective understanding on our part of the many sources of political instability in the developing world. Regional military balances are essential, but by themselves they will not constitute an adequate answer to the internal tensions that have arisen in many areas as a result of the collision between modernization and such traditional value systems as Islam.

Marshall



CC..Mr. Christopher
Mr. Newsom
Mr. Lake

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